

## The Action Called Catholic

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IN an age of commercialistic advertising characterized by cryptic tributes to the thoughtlessness of a generation the very intellects of which have been etherized by highly press-agented propaganda in the form of sensational and euphonious slogans, it is no wonder that many of us have but a very vague and nebulous conception of the significance of the term "Catholic Action."

Is "Catholic Action" just another felicitous formula of words coined by the Church in imitation of the mercantile publicists, and intended to direct the unthinking multitudes to the patronage of some ill-understood but sufficiently eulogized course of conduct? Is "Catholic Action" simply a sort of maxim minted by the ecclesiastical authorities which they hope, by constant repetition, will produce results in the religious world comparable to the miracles wrought in the world of commerce and industry by such axioms as "Patronize your neighborhood druggist," "Say it with flowers," or the motto concocted by the artful advertisers themselves, "It pays to advertise"?

What is "Catholic Action"? Why should there be such a thing? *Catholic* Action? Do not these words form a strange combination, are they not in a sort of a paradoxical juxtaposition? Let us analyze the notion.

To understand why action should be qualified as Catholic, it is a primary and fundamental necessity to know the meaning of Catholicism. Undoubtedly, you know the catechetical definition of the Catholic Faith, an interpretation as infallibly orthodox as the Council of Trent. It is precisely because you do know the answer in the catechism verbatim that I will ask you to pause a moment and meditate just what your reply would be to the query of a non-believer, "Friend, really what is Catholicism?"

Wouldn't you perhaps respond—why Catholicism is the Church founded by Christ; that Catholics had a wonderful assemblage of sacraments, a magnificent array of ceremonies,

a hierarchy of priesthood and faithful under one Visible Head, the Pope, and, of course, that we were enjoined to do certain things and were forbidden to perform many other things which we called "sins." Well, is that not Catholicism? Does not that adequately at least outline our religious system? Very well.

And, then, suppose your client should question you further as to the significance of Catholic Action. He might say, "Well, isn't Catholic simply a label which denotes your religious allegiance just as American, or Democratic declares your national or political affiliation? Why then should there be a certain action classified as Catholic? Isn't Catholicism rather something passive and static? Isn't it just that you personally believe in Christ's teaching as you consider it handed down by the Church?

#### CATHOLICISM AND ACTION

Yes, my friends, Catholicism is the religion established by a historic personage named Jesus, who was conceived in Nazareth, cradled in Bethlehem and Crucified in Calvary, but, Catholicism is something more. It is more than a formulated code of religious laws like Buddhism; it is more than a potpourri of palatable policies like Protestantism; it is more than a systematized regimentation of humankind regulated by inexorable prohibitions and inhibitions, do's and don't's; it is more than Zoroastrianism or Mohammedanism, or Confucianism, different than, and more than, any other religion because Catholicism is not an inanimate thing, it is a vivid Personality; it is not an accumulation of beliefs, it is a throbbing life; it is not a method or set of directive rules or tyrannical commandments or empty symbolism or vain ceremonies, it is the vibrant spirit of the Son of God, the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ, who authoritatively identified Himself, in the words, "*I am the Way and the Truth and the Life*"; nay, Catholicism is not so much an organization as it is the Christ-life surging, thrilling through the members of the Mystical Body; it is not just a human society assembled to honor the Almighty God, it is the Brotherhood of Man in the Fatherhood of God converging and commingling in the Hypostatic, Mediatorial, Pontifical Heart of the Divine and Incarnate Word.

*What*, then, is the action called Catholic? It is *not* the frenzied madness of avaricious business, or the tempestuous activity of voluptuous revelry, or the feverish search for satiety of the intellectually curious; no, nor is it an aimless exhaustion of physical and mental energies in a fascinating but fanatical round of rubrical exercises and religious emotionalism. Catholic Action is both the individual and coördinated exertion of the members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ animated by sacred charity, exhilarated by the Precious Blood coursing through its veins in sacramental efficacy, directed to the universal glorification of its Divine Principle and Sovereign Love, the Infinite and Eternal Trinity. Catholicism is not only magnetic and assimilative in accord with the annunciation of Him who said, "I if I be lifted up will draw all things to Myself." It is also dynamic and distributive in conformity with the beneficent ultimatum: "Go teach you all nations." Catholic Action is the purposeful radiation of the Personality of the Mystical Christ, it is the practical love-life of the extended Word Incarnate in all its amplitude, and exuberance, and spontaneity, communicating its powers and graces and life and truth and love through the exemplary sanctity of its individuals and the charity-filled apostolate of its marshalled members.

Nineteen centuries ago, the canon of Catholic Action was promulgated by Christ Jesus in the immortal classic epitome; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole mind, with thy whole soul and with all thy strength." And, again, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In order to obtain a full and thorough grasp of Catholic Action, it is prerequisite only to digest the pregnant simplicity of the first and second commandments.

Catholic Action must be studied from a twofold aspect and envisioned from a double perspective.

### LOVE THE LORD THY GOD

The first and essential phase of Catholic Action is impressively propounded in the primatial law and supreme principle of Christianity. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Before we can be of service to the warrior hosts of the Church assembled in battle array for united advance

against the common foe, we must first be secure in the divine panoply of personal preparedness. None but a fool would enter the seething maelstrom of a battlefield to participate in physical warfare unless he were fittingly equipped with the instruments of protection and offence. Yet, some, innocent of the tactics of the strategic Satan and unaware of the manifold dangers of the spiritual military campaign, presume to engage the volcanic fury and defy the infernal ingenuity of the Archfiend without the semblance of armor or weapon.

Lamentable as it may seem, it is nevertheless incontrovertibly true that there are many of our Faith who trumpet abroad the battle-cry, "Catholic Action," and blatantly proclaim membership in Catholic group activities who individually neglect completely the means and the end of the most powerful vehicle of Catholic Action—the example of a holy and militantly practical Catholic life. A federation of Catholics who unitedly spend themselves in apostolic good works and, contrarily, in their individual character and personal contacts betray the very principles they so exultingly proclaim in a body, is ultimately of no avail to the Church but, rather, its infinitely deleterious influence is a tremendous liability, a menace and a scandal.

Therefore, before we resolve to conquer the world for Christ, by innumerable exterior works, before we decide to be apostolic pioneers extending the boundaries of God's Kingdom, let us first weigh the quantity of our ammunition and test the quality of our arms. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart." To be loyal to any leader or movement, we must first be imbued with the spirit of that leader or movement. Foremost, in Catholic Action is personal devotedness to Christ; the spirit of Catholic Action is wholehearted love. First, then, thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with thy whole heart*. Catholic Action, we said, was the life of Christ surging and throbbing in the hearts and arteries of the members of the Church, the Communion of Saints.

#### THE CHRISTLY HEART

Preëminently, Catholic Action is meant to engender, to nurture and to cultivate Catholic leaders. And the prime characteristic of the Catholic leader must be the supremacy of the spirit, the primacy of charity, a Christly Heart. The concrete embodiment of a Christly Heart is manifested in a

spiritual life worthy of Christ. That heart is attuned to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus which conforms its will to the Will of the Father as construed in the decisions and counsels of Holy Mother Church. A Christly Heart means a heart that lives not only by the letter of the law but in the joyous spirit of love and of sanctifying grace; a heart, which interprets the rulings of the Apostolic and Episcopal sees not as infringements of personal right, or as enslaving chains, but rather, in their true light, as cautions and guides born of the maternal vigilance and cherishing tenderness of the most solicitous of Mothers; a Christly Heart means a personal love of the personal God, deeply rooted in a solid, interior spiritual life; a spiritual life builded upon the granitic rock of a firm and lively faith, a faith strong enough to withstand successfully the pressure of the world, the concupiscence of the flesh and the promises of the devil.

They, certainly, could not be judged sincere representatives of Catholic Action who fail to frequent Mass and the Sacraments, the blessed founts of life-conferring grace or, worse, who belittle those children of light who recognize the excellency of the Redemptive Sacrifice and the efficiency of the Holy channels of Christian vitality; nor can those be considered of Christly heart who, disregarding the protests of the Legion of Decency, attend movies portraying licence and purveying vice; nor the many who faithful and avid in the reading of the daily newspapers and perhaps a number of questionable magazines, would never be seen perusing Catholic periodicals lest they be ridiculed as over pious; nor those who having a wealth of leisure time on Sunday afternoon would never consider listening to the revealing Voice of God in the broadcasts of Catholic truth.

Those imbued with the real spirit of Catholic Action would not estimate an occasional visit to the Eucharistic God as virtue approaching martyrdom, would not appraise an hour a week in Sodality too great a measure of their precious time to spend in devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God, nor, would they think a Holy Hour once a month in worship of the August Heart of the Saviour-King an act of heroic sanctity. Catholic Action postulates and requires a fortitude enough and faith enough to profess without compromise or apology or vacillation the doctrine taught and the order instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

### THE CHRISTLY MIND

But, we are charged not only to love God with our whole heart but "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole mind." A Christly Heart, we said, means a heart of overflowing charity for God, a will in concord with the Will of the Father and an interior life orientated toward the Infinite and Eternal Trinity. And a Christly mind means an intellect open to, and enlightened by, the lustrous and luminous truth of the Divine Word; a reason that translates into action by sound direction the eloquent language of the Gospel; a mind whose deepest recesses and loftiest reaches are suffused with the sunshine of Godly truth; a mind the fashioning principle of whose thought and culture and science is the Mind of the God-Man.

The imagination of a Christly Mind cannot find its gratification in images of a suggestive nature conjured up by vicious reading, pornographic tabloids, or indecent conversations; the memory of a Christly mind ever unfolds a cinema of wholesome pictures, which stimulate pure and healthy emotions; the memory of a Christly mind is an art gallery wherein the figures of Jesus and Mary and the Saints hold prominent and cherished places. Finally, the thought of a Christly mind is thought that frequently, at least, rises above the trivialities and frivolities and commonplaces of daily experience to find its beatitude in eternal verities, in Christian sublimities, in the mysteries and mysterious delights of union with God and of meditation on the things of God. Practically, they who want Christly minds, minds worthy of leaders of Catholic Action, take advantage of opportunities to learn a little more of Infinite Wisdom, to study Catholic dogma and morals, to become acquainted with the attitude of the Mystical Christ, Holy Church, on the topics of daily importance and permanent interest, to acquire a sufficient fund of knowledge intelligently to discuss and explain the grand heritage of Christ-life which they have received in their faith.

### THE CHRISTLY SOUL AND BODY

And "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole soul." The soul is the immortal part of composite man; the soul is the principle of life. Catholic Action finds the ful-

fillment of its first function in a Christly soul. Because a Christly soul bespeaks a life of grace, a life indicative of the beauty and dignity and fecundity of a Christly Church; it means, simply, a life of exemplary Catholicism in thought and word and deed; it betokens a follower of Christ who is doing her best to reflect glory on the God who destined her for eternal happiness, on the Christ who purchased her by His Precious Blood, on the Church which bore her and of which she is a component member.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole mind and thy whole soul and with all thy strength." "With all thy strength." What does this last phrase signify? It signifies a Christly Body, a body teeming with the vigorous Christ-life, a body the strength and prowess, energies and potencies of which are the physical instruments and mediums of the striving toward perfection of the Christly Soul; a body in all things submissive to the Spirit within, sanctified by grace; a body that looks like a temple of the Holy Ghost not the pagoda of a heathen idol; a body which exemplifies redemption by the Sacred Humanity of Christ on the Cross, and consecration by the Sacrosanct Humanity of the Eucharistic Divinity.

#### LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF

But, we said, Catholic Action possessed a duplex perspective. And it does. Christ couched the description of the second aspect of Catholic Action in the words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And Pope Pius the Great, in whom we venerate the Visibility of Jesus Christ reëchoes the teaching of the Divine Master in these sentences; "Catholic Action consists not merely of the pursuit of personal Christian perfection, which is however, before all others its first and greatest end, but it also consists of a true apostolate in which Catholics of every social class participate."

In the natural order man is not only a creature endowed with an indestructible principle of individual personality but, likewise, is he a social being inseparably linked with and related to every other member of the great fraternity of human kind. In the spiritual life, we are in the words of St. Paul "members of member," in the supernatural organism of the Mystical Body, Holy Church.



## HERESIES OF THE MODERN WORLD

Scrutiny of the successive epochs of history reveals to us that the world at present is evolving from an age that enthroned individualism as the supreme entelechy of life. From the rationalism of the Renaissance and the private interpretation of Lutheran Protestantism, the apotheosis of self penetrated into every sphere of human activity and contemplation. The distinctive mark of our day is the separatism born of a materialistic outlook on life. Matter is the principle of division and the renaissance that exalted reason and nature, and Protestantism that made the *ego* the sovereign authority in all things were the parents that begot the monstrosity, the consequences of which are the wreckage of civilization and the all encompassing havoc which we behold around us today.

Consider with me, for a moment, how departmentalization conquered every field of mortal life. First Church was separated from State, then education was despoiled of religion, science and philosophy were divorced, ethics and politics were isolated, even religion and morality were rent asunder. From the principle of private authority in theology individualism ramified into every specific area of human endeavor. Rationalism was dominant in Philosophy; in Culture, Humanism prevailed; Science enthroned Determinism; Art worshiped at the shrine of Futurism; Revelation was the cardinal dogma indoctrinated in History and Anthropology; Electivism was exalted by Education; Music glorified Naturalism; Chauvinistic Nationalism reigned in Politics and Government; the Manchester School conquered the world with its Economic Liberalism; Industry rendered homage in the temple of Capitalism; Jurisprudence vaunted the autonomy of the Law; Literature danced to an orgy of Iconoclasm; the Drama bowed to Sensualism; Poetry to Free Verse. In each and every case individualism erected into the ideal, the Absolute jettisoned, self deified.

## HERESIES OF THE MODERN MAN

And what is true of the modern world in general is true likewise, and as a concomitant corollary, of modern man in particular. Modern man attempts to live as though his so-



cial nature were one thing and his personal character something entirely different; his mind is like a compartmental file with a folder for each belief completely isolated from every other as though his thoughts and emotions, his creed of theory and his code of action dwelt in planets infinitely removed from one another. He seems to think he can deify a principle in his mind and complacently defy it in his practice; that he is perfectly free, nay consistent, in cleaving his life as a father of a family, as a business or professional man, or public official, from his life simply as a human being, or if a believer, from his life as a Christian. The modern man has no principle of unification in his life, his being is an inorganic aggregation of sharply delineated categories.

#### THE CHURCH ANSWERS ANTI-CHRIST

To the Catholic, therefore, modern existence is irreconcilably antinomious. Why? Because Catholicism premises totality of outlook, a unity of life, the integrating principle of which is charity. The Catholic man of action must realize that Catholicism is the very antithesis of the modern attitude toward life. He must appreciate that every sphere of human life is related essentially to every other; that in the purposive life of man there is no single function or operation which can be evaluated as an absolute entity, isolated, that is, from the principal fact of man's relation to the rest of the universe and to God. The Catholic ideal is the unity of creation under the oneness of God. Its perspective should visualize not only the vista of time but the panoramic expanses of eternity of which time is but the corridor. The Hypostatic Union in Christ is the great Model upon which the Catholic man of action must pattern his life because herein we witness the richly orchestrated symphony wherein humanity blends with divinity, eternity is bonded with time, an apostolic career is but the gorgeous efflorescence of a Personality of Love.

The thinker who searches beneath the milieu of anarchy and chaos which form the environment in which we of today move and live discerns emerging from the crýsalis of history a new world order, the principle of which is one of diffusion. The world, as the world, reacts from the individualism of the past toward measures excessively socialistic in their tenden-

cies, toward a bureaucratic centralization, totalitarian commonwealths and an internationalism without the transcendent Absolute of a Personal God, toward Communism built upon a material principle of expansion and therefore transient and with the seeds of corruption inherent in it, as in all that is of matter and time. The Church of God visualizing better than the world, places before men a Communism of Sacred charity, the Mystical Body galvanized into corporate action and electrified with the all-embracing charity superabounding from the river Heart of the Crucified Christ.

The Church of God with nineteen centuries of accumulated wisdom and experience looks out from the eminence of the Petrine observatory upon a stricken and distraught world and filled with the consuming ardor of the Holy Spirit she determines to master all her wondrous strength in a mighty effort of charity once more to redeem the race from the abysmal Gehenna of perdition into which in its intellectual pride and self-involution it has precipitated itself. If we look out with the Vicar of Christ through the glasses of Mother Church we perceive on every side the inevitable signs of a civilization's decadence; the growth of irreligion, the decline of public morals, disintegration of the family and the home, disrespect for all authority, mounting waves of crime, governments crumbling, politics polluted, the sanctity of marriage despised, atheism rampant; pagan morals and its accompaniments, war, race-suicide, sin, vice, violence, these and a milliard similar evils as extensive and as powerful, imperil the life of nations and jeopardize the destiny of mankind. Combating all such movements and substituting the virtue and the stability of Christ's solution is the great *social* mission of the Church. And the participation of the great mass of the laity in this apostolate of the hierarchy is the Church's answer to the challenge of Anti-Christ and the hosts of evil—this is Catholic Action.

#### A NEW SOCIAL ORDER

The providential panacea for the ills of the world, as viewed by Holy Church, is the construction of a new social order governed by Christian social justice and informed by the social charity of the Divine Heart of Jesus resurging in

the souls and refracted in the lives of men. The liturgical movement is the Mystical Body lifted up in corporate prayer; the very center and powerhouse of Catholic Action is the Chaliced Heart of Christ, the Priest perpetuating the Act of Redemption in the omnipotent holocaust of the Altar; study clubs and literary societies are the regiments of Christian soldiers banded together for mental training and for skill in apologetics; Catholic Missions supported by the laity is the Church in consolidated effort of temporal development and spiritual conquest; Catholic education is the supreme work of providing future warriors for the Faith; the Catholic Press is the very right arm of Catholic Action, the pen that is mightier than the sword, the artillery of the Church without which it cannot hope to defend its citadel against the nefarious attacks of the foe and the inundating poison gases which flow forth in a constant torrent from the secular newspapers, the propaganda agencies of Protestantism and the printing plants of organized masonry, atheism, communism and the thousand other militant antagonists of Christ's Word enshrined in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Retreat Movement is the Church's plan of training camp for the Christian crusaders wherein are moulded characters of structural probity and heroic fabric who will prove invulnerable before the assaults of the enemy. These, and sundry other, are the weapons and instruments which Christ through the Church pleads with the laity to take up and valiantly go forth and do battle in God's Holy Name that she may vanquish the phalanx of neo-paganism and the army of the new-morality even as in the day of Christian antiquity she turned back the powers of original paganism; even as in the seventh and eighth centuries she rescued Europe and the Western world from the barbaric hordes sweeping down from the Asiatic wilds; even as in the Middle Ages her gallant defenders crushed Islam and the demons of the Orient bent on obliterating the sacred name of Jesus.

When we look back reminiscently down the aisle of history and study the imperishable glories of the Church's triumphs we cannot but thrill to the beauty and grandeur of her career which unfolds as the divinest of divine romances but we may sometimes overlook the fact that each of the sublime achievements recorded in her biography were but every one the logical consummation of ten thousand appar-

ently unimportant little sacrifices; that the decisive victories in all their alluring glamor and melodramatic magnificence were but the rewards contributed by and attributable to multitudinous prosaic duties well done.

And when our posterity read of the great renaissance of Catholic life and action, of Catholic thought and culture distinguishing this our twentieth century, they will undoubtedly delight in what will then be a historic revelation; but, how many will recognize that this recrudescence of primeval Christianity and its spirit of pristine charity was due to the zealous work accomplished in study clubs, in evidence guilds, in symposiums of scholastic philosophy, in personal and group retreats, in the circulation of Catholic literature in public and private libraries, in the study and propagation of the Holy Father's encyclicals, in the advancement of the cult of the Virgin Mary through Sodalities, and of the promotion of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Apostleship of Prayer, in the spread of Catholic truth through the radio, through pamphlet racks and, above all, by Catholic doctrine impressively interpreted in the lives and characters of exemplary Catholic men, and of Catholic women personifying the splendid ideals of chaste and noble womanhood.

Let us waste no time in idle speculation but, rather, let us make a thorough and sincere examination of conscience. Let each answer for himself or for herself the practical questions asked you now. To what extent are you participating in Catholic Action? Are *you* familiar with the liturgical movement? Do you support the Catholic Press, if you can afford to; do you subscribe to; do you read any Catholic periodicals? Do you understand the Church's teaching on the relations of capital and labor, on economics, on world peace and disarmament, on marriage, on education? Do you ever study these vitally important matters? Do you ever patronize the Catholic books on these questions contained in your own Public Library? Could you name the leaders of Catholic thought and life today and are you acquainted with their writings and works? Do you appreciate the rich significance of the term Mystical Body, or are you one who professes Catholic Action and at the same time would be ashamed to be known as a reader of spiritual books?

Do you realize that thousands of priests and nuns and

lay people are sacrificing their lives in the mission fields of foreign lands today in a manner emulative of Christ in the Eucharist, comparable to a Xavier in India, of a Patrick in Ireland, of a Sierra and a Jogues and a Brebeuf in nascent America? Have you any practical sympathy with their work? Do you ever utter a prayer or make a financial offering in their interest? Synoptically, do you believe in Catholic Action or just in shallow prattle and elaborate vaporizings about Catholic Action? Is the lightning and reverberating answer of your soul to each of these questions an indictment of ignorance, of apathy, of indifference? If so, resolve tonight to become a seething dynamo of Catholic life, a blazing torch of Catholic truth, a consuming fire of Catholic charity. Resolve to possess a Christly Heart, a Christly Mind, a Christly Soul, a Christly Body and a Christly Life, personal and social.

## St. Joseph in Liturgy and Devotion

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THE traditional liturgy ranks the blessed in heaven in the following order: the Blessed Virgin, Archangel St. Michael and the other angels, St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, the holy patriarchs and prophets, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Andrew, St. John, the other apostles and evangelists, and so on. Since the great mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption are the central theme of God's providence in behalf of man, the heavenly hierarchy is based on the more or less active part that God has assigned to the individuals and groups in these mysteries. Accordingly, St. Joseph has a place after St. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. There are sufficient reasons why the Baptist should take precedence over St. Joseph.<sup>1</sup>

The Church has a deep insight into the divine mysteries entrusted to her care and has never failed to give due honor where honor is due, manifesting in this regard a remarkable

<sup>1</sup>For attempts to have the foster-father of Jesus given preference before St. John the Baptist in the official liturgy, see the *Bulletin Paroissial Liturgique*, March-April issue, 1931, and the replies thereto in the June and August issues of the same review; also *Liturgische Zeitschrift*, Vol. III, No. 12, 1930-31.

sense of proportion. If St. Joseph was apparently not duly honored at first, it must be considered that the designs of divine Providence enter into the sphere of the Church's attitude. The history of the cult of St. Joseph might be viewed in the light of this principle.

St. Joseph is called by the Holy Ghost "a just man." Besides this high praise coming from the Spirit of Holiness Himself, St. Joseph was privileged by God to become the foster-father of the Saviour and the spouse of the Virgin Mother. These singular distinctions certainly entitle him to high honors, unless it is in the plans of divine Providence that development of his external cult be retarded. It is certain that St. Joseph was venerated in all periods of the Church's history, even if no special feast in his honor existed for many centuries. He was always honored, for instance, with Jesus and Mary during the Christmas celebrations. The Christians of the early Church, who were thoroughly conversant with the Mystical Body doctrine, cannot have overlooked the fact that he who was the protector of Jesus and Mary, the most precious treasures of God, should likewise cherish and aid the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. One can hardly believe that St. Joseph, who today is, after the Blessed Virgin Mary, the most popular of all saints, was neglected in an age of most fervent Christianity. In fact the most illustrious of the early Fathers of the Church, *e. g.*, St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, eulogize the high privileges and virtues of St. Joseph. In the Eastern Church we find the first witnesses to the public recognition paid to the saint. A Coptic calendar of the eighth century mentions his feast on July 20th. From the East the liturgical devotion to the foster-father of the Saviour seems to have gradually spread to the West, beginning with the ninth century. During the thirteenth century it received a new impetus. Great saints like St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Gertrude became ardent champions of the cult of St. Joseph in the houses of their respective Orders. A charming account of the honor bestowed upon St. Joseph in heaven is found in the *Life and Revelations of St. Gertrude*. In a vision she beholds a solemn liturgical function unfolding itself on the feast of the Annunciation: "The Gospel *Missus est* is chanted, and at the name of St. Joseph, the spouse of the Virgin Mother, all the saints

make a profound inclination to him, testifying, by the serenity and sweetness of their countenances, that they rejoiced with him for his exalted dignity."

During the fourteenth century the feast of St. Joseph was introduced into the Franciscan and Dominican Orders. In the fifteenth century we find great saints as St. Bernardine of Siena, and doctors of theology as John Gerson and others, making special efforts to promote the cult of St. Joseph. Toward the end of this century his feast was officially taken into the Roman Calendar and observed on March 19th. In 1621 Pope Gregory XV extended it to the whole Church. In Spain it was the great St. Teresa of Avila who dedicated the first convent of her reform to St. Joseph and expressed her well-known word on the efficacy of prayer to the saint: "I cannot recall to mind that I have ever asked him at any time for anything which he has not granted, and I am filled with amazement when I consider the great favors God has given me through this blessed saint—the dangers from which he has delivered me, both of body and mind. To other saints Our Lord seems to have given grace to succor men in some special necessity; but to this glorious saint, I know by experience, to give help to us in all. And Our Lord would have us understand that as He was Himself subject to him on earth (St. Joseph having the title of father and being His guardian, could command Him), so now in heaven He carries out all his petitions."

These striking words of the great contemplative, no doubt, did much to spread devotion to the saint throughout Spain. In 1689 the reformed Order of Carmelites obtained permission to celebrate the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph on the third Sunday after Easter. Soon this feast was extended to all Spain and other countries. From the seventeenth century we have many witnesses that the foster-father of Our Lord enjoyed great veneration in France. Father Jacquinot, a member of the Society of Jesus, in his work, *Gloire de St. Joseph*, speaking of the prophecies of the saints, writes: "They have announced that in the latter ages of the world the glories of St. Joseph will be brought to light; that God will draw aside the veil which hitherto prevented us from seeing the wondrous sanctuary of St. Joseph's soul; that the Holy Ghost will inspire the faithful to proclaim the praises of this admirable saint, and to build



monasteries, churches, and altars in his honor; that throughout the entire kingdom of the Church militant, he shall be looked upon as a special protector, for was he not the protector of the very Founder of that kingdom, namely, Our Lord Jesus Christ? And that the Sovereign Pontiff will, by a secret impulse from Heaven, ordain that the feast of this great patriarch be solemnly celebrated throughout the length and breadth of the spiritual domain of St. Peter."<sup>2</sup>

The last four popes have accorded special honors to St. Joseph. In December, 1870, after the taking of Rome by the Piedmontese, Pope Pius XI, urged by the petitions of the bishops and faithful, solemnly declared the saint Patron and Protector of the entire Church and raised his feast on March 19th to the rank of double of the first class. At the Vatican Council of the same year, thirty-eight cardinals among the forty-two who attended the sessions, second by two hundred and twenty archbishops and bishops, petitioned the Council to accord to St. Joseph a special honor in the liturgy of the Church. Pope Pius X, on March 18, 1909, added the litany of St. Joseph to the number of liturgical litanies and ordered that the feast of his Patronage henceforth be celebrated with an octave on the Wednesday of the second Sunday after Easter. The special Preface for the feasts of the saint was composed by Pope Benedict XV. Pope XI, in a discourse, commented on the mission entrusted to St. Joseph as follows: "A unique mission, indeed, to guard the Son of God, the King of the world, and to protect the virginity of Mary; a unique mission, to participate in the great mystery hidden before the eyes of the world, and so to cooperate in the Incarnation and Redemption. The entire sanctity of St. Joseph lies precisely in the faithful accomplishment of this mission at once so grand and so humble, so sublime and so hidden, so splendid and so enveloped in obscurity."

The Mass for the Solemnity of St. Joseph on Wednesday in the second week after the octave of Easter brings out in bold relief the protectorship over the Church with which God honored the saint. This protectorship he shares with God; for, as the Introit reads, "The Lord is our helper and protector; in Him our heart shall rejoice, and in His holy

<sup>2</sup>Quotation from *The Church and the Christian Soul*, by Alice Lady Lovat. New York, 1923, p. 171.

name we have trusted, alleluia." In the Collect we ask God to make us worthy of the heavenly intercession of him whom we venerate as our protector upon earth. The Epistle draws a parallel between the Egyptian Joseph and our saint. St. Joseph, too, is called "*filius accrescens*, a growing son," one hidden in life as also in the early liturgy, but then growing in prestige, till finally the entire Church was placed under his protecting hand; and he was to be "a pastor, the stone of Israel," upon whom the Almighty shall shower blessings.

The alleluia-verse introduces the saint as speaking to us: "In whatever tribulation they shall cry to me, I will hear them and be their protector always." And trusting in his power of intercession we immediately pray: "Obtain for us, Joseph, grace to lead an innocent life; and may our life ever be shielded by thy patronage." The Gospel recalls the baptism of Our Lord in the Jordan and the manifestation of His divinity on the part of the Blessed Trinity on that solemn occasion. The concluding words point to the great distinction of St. Joseph as the foster-father of Jesus: "And Jesus Himself was beginning about the age of thirty years; being (as it was supposed) the son of Joseph."

In the Offertory the title of the saint as the Protector of the new Jerusalem, the Church, is recalled, and the faithful are asked to praise the Lord for this patronage.

Due thanks and glory are given to God in the Preface, because He has given St. Joseph, "a just man, as a spouse to the Virgin Mother of God," who, "as a faithful and prudent servant, was set over His family, that with fatherly care he might guard His only-begotten Son." The Communion prayer helps us to understand better the relationship between our devotions to Mary and Joseph and our devotion to our Eucharistic Lord: "But Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of which was born Jesus, who is called Christ, alleluia."

Today the Church, Christ's Mystical Body, once more proceeds on the way of suffering. Her enemies on all sides are striving to undermine its foundations. Modern paganism is tending to disintegrate family life and to destroy the sanctity of childhood. Divorce and race-suicide are hideous evils that are eating down into the human family. Thousands of members of the Church are lacking the necessities

of life for themselves and their families. St. Joseph is destined to be one of Christ's most powerful auxiliaries in the combat against these forces of destruction and breeders of dismay in our times. *Ita ad Joseph*—go to Joseph. He who protected the Holy Family from evil will know how to aid his faithful clients in their various needs of soul and body.

## Articles of Interest for the Month

- The Morality of Gambling. Martin J. Scott, S.J. *Columbia*. February.
- Analysis of the Rerum Novarum. Alphonsus Ronnar, O.F.M. *Irish Monthly*. February.
- Devotional Literature in Post-Reformation England. Herbert Thurston, S.J. *Month*. February.
- How Malthus Found a Hearing. R. G. Cookson. *Month*. February.
- A New Alignment of Capital and Labor. Right Rev. Msgr. Aloysius J. Muench. *Salesianum*. January.
- The Uniate Churches and American Catholics. Thomas F. O'Connor. *Sign*. February.
- Catholic Progress in England. Denis Gwynn. *Sign*. February.
- The Writer and His Topics. Francis Talbot, S.J. *America*. February 2.
- Art, Literature, and the Thesis. Kurt F. Reinhardt. *Commonweal*. February 1.
- The English Schism. J. F. Scholfield. *Ave Maria*. February 2.
- A Reviewer Reviewed. Hilaire Belloc. *Clergy Review*. February.
- Another "Conspiracy of Silence." Francis S. Betten, S.J. *America*. February 2.
- Communism: the Monstrous Parody. Francis McManus. *Irish Monthly*. February.
- Catholic Morals and Economic Practice. Joseph Clayton. *Irish Rosary*. February.
- Da Vinci's St. Anne. Edythe Helen Browne. *Ave Maria*. February 9.
- Viennese Impressions. John Murray. *Month*. February.

- Catholic Action and the Library. Eugene P. Willging. *Catholic Action*. January.
- The Christ-Life of the Church. Fulton J. Sheen. *Sign*. February.
- The Washington Scene, II: What Happened in the Senate. Joseph F. Thorning, S.J. *America*. February 14.
- The Liturgy in the Christian Home. Joseph Kreuter, O.S.B. *Orate Fratres*. January 26.
- New Social Frontiers. Johannes Mattern. *Commonweal*. February 8.
- The Author Plans an Article. Francis Talbot, S.J. *America*. February 16.
- The Decline of Communism in Great Britain. Rev. Thomas J. Fitzgerald. *Clergy Review*. February.
- Advantages of Spiritual Reading. Henry Borgmann, C.S.S.R. *Acolyte*. February 16.
- Germany and the Hitler Government. Baron Von Rheinbaden. *Irish Rosary*. February.
- My Six Conversions: The Case of Spain. G. K. Chesterton. *America*. February 16.
- Cardinal Bourne. The Most Rev. Alban Goodier, S.J. *Month*. February.
- Our Real Life and the Modern Attitude Towards Sickness and Suffering. D. Fahey, C.S.Sp. *Irish Rosary*. February.
- Non-Catholic Action. John J. O'Connor. *Ave Maria*. February 9.
- Housing in New York City. Myles A. Paige. *Interracial Review*. February.
- Causes and Communism. John LaFarge, S.J. *America*. February 9.
- Catholicism and Culture. Riobárd O. Faracháin. *Irish Monthly*. February.
- The Meaning of Economic Activity. Charles Bruehl, D.D. *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*. February.
- New Social Frontiers. Johannes Mattern. *Commonweal*. February 15.
- The Family in the Divine Scheme of Salvation. Joseph Kreuter, O.S.B. *Orates Fratres*. February 23.
- Radicals of the Right. John A. Toomey, S.J. *America*. February 2.
- Organization of the Church in America. Rev. Thomas Cleary. *Acolyte*. February 16.
- Economic Internationalism. John A. Ryan. *Commonweal*. February 1.
- The Problems of a Catholic Daily. Joseph G. Lagnese. *Ave Maria*. February 9.

- St. Ursula's Company: 1535-1935. Paul E. Campbell. *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*. February.
- Murder Will Shout. Michael Williams. *Commonweal*. February 15.
- A Catholic Interracial Program. John LaFarge, S.J. *Interracial Review*. February.
- Custom as Affecting Rites and Ceremonies. T. L. Bouscaren, S.J. *Acolyte*. February 16.
- Laud. Hilaire Belloc. *Sign*. February.
- The Church As Divine Mystery. Damasus Winzen, O.S.B. *Orate Fratres*. January 26.
- An A B C of Mexican Politics. P. S. M. Ridland. *America*. February 23.
- The Schism of Henry VIII. Ross J. S. Hoffman. *Catholic World*. February.
- The Vatican and Nationalism. George Seldes. *Commonweal*. February 22.
- The Automobile Slave Trade. Paul L. Blakely, S.J. *America*. February 23.
- Gandhi's Harijan Campaign. Jerome G. D'Souza, S.J. *Catholic World*. February.
- Do Politics Make Sense? Moorhouse I. X. Millar. *Commonweal*. February 1.
- The Sanctification of Marriage. Karl Adam. *Orate Fratres*. February 23.
- The Log of a Laborer. A Dublin Unemployed. *Irish Rosary*. February.
- Capitalism and Its Alternatives. E. Cahill, S.J. *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*. February.
- Renaissance. W. F. P. Stockley. *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*. February.